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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002005

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TAGS: PREL KPKO SU FR

SUBJECT: FRANCE: NEXT STEPS ON DARFUR PEACEKEEPING,
BROADENING ROLE OF FRENCH FORCES IN CHAD

REF: STATE 65750

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d)
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The MFA on May 16 expressed reservations about reftel ideas on next steps for Darfur peacekeeping, in particular an approach to the AU and UN to revisit AU PSC decisions taken in November 2006. At the same time, France does continue to support an effective PKO for Darfur meeting UN requirements. Newly appointed Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner will reportedly control France's Darfur policy and may bring new energy to the portfolio. France may also broaden the mandate of Operation Epervier (France's military presence in Chad), allowing it to protect NGOs and refugee camps. END SUMMARY.

DARFUR/SUDAN PKO

¶2. (C) During a May 16 discussion of reftel demarche with MFA Sudan desk officer Frederic Bouvier, we again asked directly whether France would lobby the UN and AU on the need to reinforce UN command and control of the proposed hybrid operation to ensure greater effectiveness. Bouvier responded that France of course supported the deployment in Darfur of an effective PKO in accordance with UN standards. Although he stopped short of opposing outright reftel approach, he said we needed to take into account the decisions taken by the AU PSC in November 2006 and suggested that revisiting the issue with the AU could well lead to problems. That said, Bouvier agreed that there should be a clear command and control structure, with military decisions in principle determined by DPKO in New York. (NOTE: The French worked closely with Joint UN-AU Special Representative Adada when he was the Republic of Congo's FM during the ROC's recent tenure as AU President. Bouvier gave the impression that Adada is, for the present, "more AU than UN" and that reopening discussion of the AU PSC's November 2006 decisions on Darfur could put Adada in a difficult position that the French may want to avoid. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) Bouvier noted with approval the appointment of Bernard Kouchner as Foreign Minister in President Sarkozy's government. Bouvier said that Kouchner had demonstrated strong interest in Darfur and that he was likely to have policy oversight on Darfur, with control of the issue resting at the MFA (as opposed to the Presidency). Bouvier expected Kouchner to bring new energy to the Darfur debate, suggesting that it may become easier to reach agreement on issues such as the one at hand.

CHAD

¶4. (C) Bouvier remarked that the GOF was considering changes to the mission of Operation Epervier (or "Sparrowhawk," the name given to French forces deployed in Chad). These changes, which he believed would be welcomed by the U.S. and others interested in the Sudan/Chad/C.A.R. region, may produce an expansion of the operation's mandate to allow for the protection of the humanitarian corridor in Chad, including NGO personnel and refugee camps operating and located therein. Bouvier stressed that this was still under consideration and that he could not say whether such changes would actually come into effect. He noted that France might also seek UNSC approval for an expanded Operation Epervier, similar to the UNSC mandate obtained for France's Operation Licorne in Cote d'Ivoire.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: We were disappointed and somewhat puzzled by the rather technical explanation Bouvier provided in response to reftel points on Darfur PKO issues, and will continue to discuss the issue with him and his colleagues to determine the best way to overcome their reticence (which stands in contrast to their stated overall support for just such a mission). END COMMENT.

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